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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 2 July 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you that the situation of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation remains dire owing to the repressive, destructive and colonial policies and practices that continue to be perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in deliberate, systematic and grave violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law and with total impunity. Combined with the Israeli Government's blatant rejection of peace and relentless provocations and incitement, this situation has deepened the pervasive sense of insecurity among the Palestinian people and the hopelessness regarding any possible redress of this appalling injustice. Moreover, it is inflaming tensions reminiscent of years past, including this time last year, when Israel launched a devastating military aggression against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, from which they continue to suffer gravely and have yet to recover.

The fact is that, whether at the hands of Israeli occupying forces or Israeli settlers, the lives of the Palestinian people in Occupied Palestine are in constant danger. Their fundamental human rights are being grossly violated as they endure horrific abuses to their bodies, minds and spirits and the destruction and usurpation of their land and properties. No segment of the Palestinian civilian population has been spared — whether children, women or men, elderly or disabled, prisoners or detainees, refugees or displaced. With obvious intent, Israel continues to pursue policies and measures aimed at controlling every aspect of Palestinian life, forcibly subjugating the Palestinian people, collectively punishing, intimidating and dehumanizing them, causing harm, including death and injury to persons and destruction to property, and entrenching its illegitimate occupation.

Here, recalling with sorrow all the innocent Palestinian victims of these Israeli crimes, I must recall the heinous crime perpetrated a year ago today against a Palestinian child, Mohammed Abu Khdeir, which shocked our consciences and

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broke our hearts. Mohammed, age 16, was abducted from the street outside his home in Occupied East Jerusalem, beaten and driven to a forest, where he was burned alive by a gang of terrorist Israeli settlers. In memory of his son, Hussein Abu Khdeir has said, "We don't forget him. We burn on the inside every time we remember the way he was murdered."

We hold the Israeli Government responsible for this crime and the culture of impunity in which Israeli settlers have so vilely and continuously assaulted Palestinian civilians, and we join Mohammed's parents in demanding accountability for the killing of their child and demanding justice for him and for all the Palestinian children who have been brutally killed by the occupying forces and settlers in the name of this illegitimate and belligerent occupation. In this regard, we insist again that the Israeli Government, the Israeli occupying forces and Israeli settler militias belong on the list of grave violators of child rights in the context of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and we will not relent in calling for such listing in the face of ongoing violations and crimes against our innocent and defenceless children.

In this regard, I must draw attention to the civilian casualties caused by the Israeli occupying forces in the period since our last letter. Just some examples include another Israeli settler hit-and-run attack, with the victim this time a 3-year-old boy, Yasser Shammas, in Occupied East Jerusalem on 21 June. In another incident, captured on video, a Palestinian man, Abdullah Eyad Ghneimat, age 22, was killed by occupying forces on 14 June in Kufr Malik village near Ramallah when he was shot, struck and left under a military jeep for three hours, bleeding to death. Ghneimat was heading to his job at a poultry farm when Israeli soldiers shot him in the back and chased him down as he tried to return home. The jeep then hit Ghneimat, pushing him into a wall that collapsed on him and caused the jeep to overturn on him as well. The soldiers vacated the jeep and left Ghuneimat under it with his back crushed and his leg completely severed. He was trapped under the vehicle for three hours, screaming in pain, while gas and oil dripped over him and occupying forces obstructed emergency assistance. Residents were able to lift the jeep off him, but it was too late, as Ghuneimat had died. Also caught on video, on 12 June, was the severe beating of a Palestinian man, Shadi Al-Ghobashi, near the Jalazoun refugee camp. This savage beating was apparently prompted by his appeal to occupying forces in the area to stop firing tear gas that was causing suffering to his family, including his children.

Israeli occupying forces also continue to fire live ammunition at Palestinian civilians, including children, causing loss of life and injury during daily military raids and so-called "search and arrest operations" throughout the West Bank and in attacks on peaceful demonstrators in Palestinian villages protesting against the occupation. They also continue to fire towards civilians in border areas of Gaza and at fishermen, with at least eight recorded incidents in the past week. For instance, on 24 June, near the so-called "access restricted areas", Israeli soldiers shot three civilians, including a child and an 18-year-old mentally disabled youth, and, on 29 June, shot and injured two young Palestinian men east of Khuzaa. According to available data, in the months of April, May and June, Israeli occupying forces and settlers killed 12 Palestinians and injured more than 317 people, including children. In this period, terrorist settlers carried out at least 196 attacks. There is no doubt that impunity for such Israeli crimes fosters a cynical disregard for Palestinian life and encourages the perpetration of more crimes against our people.

In this same time period, the occupying Power has arrested and detained approximately 1,118 Palestinians, among them many children. By Israel's own admission, the number of Palestinians held captive in jails has grown by 26 per cent since 2011 and there are at least 5,686 Palestinian prisoners in its jails, of whom 1,610 are detainees. For example, in Al-Khalil alone, it has been documented that 550 Palestinians have been detained since the start of 2015.

Just from 15 to 28 June, in military operations across the West Bank, Israeli soldiers detained 156 Palestinians, including four women, three children and a disabled 19-year-old, Yahiya Al-Huwar, suffering from speech and hearing disabilities and other health difficulties. Among them were Seham Al-Battat, the mother of a Palestinian detainee, Haitham Al-Battat, who was abducted from her home near Al-Khalil; Khaled Shamsiyya, age 20, from Nablus; and Sameh Ayesh, age 18, from the Shu'fat refugee camp, as well as two Palestinian children, Fadi Al-Natsha and Mahmoud Al-Rajabi, both age 15, from Al-Khalil. Israel's military court also continues to impose prison sentences against children, including Mohammed Atwan, age 16, who recently was sentenced to eight months, and Hussein Issa, age 17, who received a seven-month sentence. This pattern of targeting Palestinian children through killing, maiming and detention clearly aims to disrupt Palestinian family and community life and deprive Palestinian children and youth of development and education, destroying the hopes for a viable Palestinian civil society. We reiterate our demand for an end to Israel's arrest of Palestinian civilians, an end to their abuse and torture in captivity, and the release of all Palestinians imprisoned and detained by Israel and respect for international humanitarian and human rights law.

In this regard, we again draw attention to the suffering endured by Khader Adnan, a 37-year-old Palestinian who has been repeatedly arbitrarily detained by Israel and has launched prolonged hunger strikes in protest of his detention, most recently ending a 55-day hunger strike in which he endangered his own life as he sought to draw attention to his plight and this appalling injustice and abuse by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people. Indeed, Israel persists with and has intensified its punitive measures against prisoners and detainees, including acts tantamount to torture. This includes approval by the Israeli Government of a proposed law to force-feed hunger-striking prisoners, another form of torture and coercion. Further, it has decided to stop providing prisoners with medication, under pretext of an "insufficient budget", compounding its deliberate medical neglect compromising the health of Palestinian prisoners.

In addition to all of these crimes against the Palestinian civilian population, Israel persists with its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip in flagrant collective punishment of the 1.8 million Palestinians there. The humanitarian and socioeconomic situation remains absolutely dire one year since the destructive Israeli military aggression and eight years since the imposition of this inhumane blockade, which has caused soaring unemployment and widespread abject poverty, especially among the Palestine refugee population. In this regard, I must draw attention to the acute challenges being faced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East owing to an unprecedented funding crisis, which is compromising its ability to address the refugees' most basic needs, including for food aid and shelter for thousands displaced by Israel's war against Gaza, and which must be cause for international alarm and action to avert further deterioration and destabilization of the situation.

At the same time, Israel continues its illegal settlement colonization of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. All of these policies and practices are further entrenching this illegal occupation and the fragmentation and isolation of the Palestinian people. The confiscation of Palestinian land and the construction of settlements and the wall continue, as does the demolition of homes and properties and the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, including Bedouin and herding communities. Israeli occupying forces and settlers also continue to destroy Palestinian land and natural resources, including, inter alia, the destruction of hundreds of forest trees in a natural reserve in the West Bank, the uprooting of dozens of olive saplings in Husan town near Bethlehem, the uprooting of approximately 20,000 5-year-old saplings planted near Tubas city, on the pretext that the land is designated as both a natural reserve and a firing zone for the occupying Power, the burning of wheat crops in a village near Tulkarem and the destruction of 70 olive trees in Nablus, all perpetrated with the clear intent to forcibly oust Palestinian farmers from their land and cause destitution to Palestinian families relying on their crops to make a living.

All of these actions are being committed by the occupying Power in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, notably articles 49 and 33, further proving Israel's deceit about any intent to end its occupation of the State of Palestine and its total lack of willingness to stop settler violence and terror against Palestinian civilians and their homes and properties, including schools and religious sites. In this regard, churches and mosques have also continued to be targeted during the recent period, with hate speech and incitement by Israeli government and religious leaders surely encouraging such outrageous acts, which constitute a serious affront to Palestine's Muslims and Christians as well as the faithful around the world. Sixty-eight attacks against Muslim and Christian holy sites have been recorded in just the past three months.

In this connection, I must also refer to Israel's ongoing obstruction of the Palestinian people's freedom of worship as it continues to impose arbitrary measures impairing freedom of movement in collective punishment of the population and impairing access to holy places, including during this holy month of Ramadan. The Israeli occupation continues to impose a stringent permit regime hindering the access of our people to the holy shrines in Occupied East Jerusalem, and continues its attempts to alter the demography, character and heritage of the City by turning it into an exclusive Jewish city. Tens of thousands of Palestinian women and men in the West Bank have been forced to make their way through numerous Israeli military checkpoints in order to reach Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam, and hundreds of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, including elderly persons and women, have been denied Israeli-required permission to travel to Jerusalem for Ramadan prayers.

The international community, including the Security Council, cannot remain silent as Israel, the occupying Power, continues its aggression, human rights violations and collective punishment against the Palestinian people by all means and methods, including through its terrorist settlers, and continues with its rabid illegal colonization of the Palestinian land, destroying all prospects for realizing the two-State solution for peace. The Security Council in particular must address this crisis situation, which continues to threaten regional and international peace and security. The Council must unequivocally demand that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately cease all violations against the Palestinian people and comply with its

legal obligations in accordance with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Moreover, the Council and the international community as a whole must act collectively and concretely to ensure the de-escalation of this grave situation and the dangerously rising tensions and to salvage the prospects for peace. The Palestinian people, along with people across the region and around the globe, continue to look to the Council to uphold its Charter duties, uphold the rule of law and uphold human rights in order to establish and preserve peace and security in our world in all cases without exception.

This letter is in follow-up to our 545 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 12 June 2015 (A/ES-10/681-S/2015/433), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed against the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, for which it must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.